
Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme

South Central Region Position Update July 2023

Background information

The Full Business Case (FBC) for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) was formally approved by the Government's Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) on Friday 23 July 2021. This was a key milestone and provided the cross-government support to move the programme into the delivery phase, however this is conditional on the programme meeting the challenges of cost, coverage scope and resilience.

The early part of 2021 presented challenges for the Programme, as progress in delivering the technology has been slow. In addition, a concern was raised regarding one of the suppliers' main contractors' ambitions within ESN. This was further compounded, as in mid-2021, a challenge was received by the supplier from the Competition and Markets Authority regarding their association with Airwave and their performance in the delivery of the ESMCP.

The Programme has since announced that they will be moving away from the supplier (Motorola) and are preparing themselves for a re-lotting process which will be a full procurement of Lot 2 – User Services. A short chronology of events leading to this can be found at Appendix A.

The Programme has announced a further expected delay of at least 18 - 24 months due to the re-lotting and re-procurement process which must be followed as a result of Motorola parting company with the Programme. These are further delays to a Programme that was originally planned to be completed in 2019.

The Programme Deployment Team is being stood down and no longer undertaking deployment planning activities with local user organisation teams. It is not believed that these resources will be stood up again until mid-2025. This will allow for the successful bidder for Lot 2 to embed and for planning activities to recommence. The Programme recognises that although there may be a risk in losing momentum, it will be difficult for user organisations to continue to prepare for transition without indicative timelines.

The South Central (SC) ESMCP Programme Board had already requested that the Project Managers in the region start to look at different ways that we, as a region, could continue to engage with the Programme during this time but also ensure an efficient and productive use of Project Manager resources.

The NFCC central ESMCP team have provided an early impact assessment to local teams. Whilst this has sought to categorise the work during these delays, it has not ventured into quantification of the scale of each task or area of work, nor an assessment of the resource required. However, it has been useful to the SC Team in that it has clarified the scale of involvement required at a local level during this interim period.

In early 2021, workloads for the SC region were in line with the Programme Business Case being worked to. This amounted to the Thames Valley Collaboration PM (TVPM) working to the agreed contracted hours and the Service PMs utilising approximately 15% - 20% of their time on ESMCP.

The focus of effort by the SC region has been:

- Re-establishing the Regional Programme Manager role as it had been vacant in the previous year with two of the PMs managing the role,
- Responding to Fire Funding Policy (FFP) requests as part of the Local User Resource (LUR) review,
- Responding to Programme and NFCC requests,
- Coverage assurance work,
- Fully engaging with the Programme workstreams,
- Fully engaging at a strategic level,
- Managing internal governance.

Over the past few months, the workload has diminished as the SC region completed and agreed a business case with the Fire Funding Policy team and the LUR requests have ceased. There has been a reduction in assistance requests from the Programme and the NFCC, as some Programme workstreams are now limited/suspended.

The current Local Transition Resource (LTR) funding ceased as of 01 April 2023. Therefore, for the foreseeable future, there will be no funds available for resources to work on ESMCP activities.

For the interim period, the NFCC central team will be maintaining the Fire Sector engagement with the Programme and provide the assurance that ESN will meet the needs of fire services.

Although most of the work will be managed by the NFCC team, there will be a need to liaise with local Services as and when required.

The NFCC/Programme has asked each Service to maintain a strategic owner for ESMCP and, in addition, that the ESMCP reference is assigned to a suitable individual or single point of contact (SPoC).

Future engagement of the Thames Valley region with ESMCP

In September 2022, when the delays first became apparent, the SC ESMCP board anticipated that resource changes would have to be made and commissioned the Project Managers to review how best to engage with the Programme for the duration of the delays. This was to ensure that any effort put into ESMCP is effective, beneficial, and balanced with other more pressing priorities within Services.

The SC project managers together with the Thames Valley (TV) project manager have been considering a number of options to enable the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for the TV region to make an informed decision on the future engagement with the

Programme over the next 2-3 years. It has been agreed that the region will continue with coverage activities only and will attend Fire Customer Group meetings.

The Thames Valley region already has an established SRO at strategic level; therefore, this governance can remain unchanged and there will be a single representative for the Thames Valley team at the NFCC ESMCP strategic meetings.

The SPoC position refers to a more tactical level of contact which is currently carried out by four Project Managers across the Thames Valley region. The recommendation from the future engagement paper refers to the provision of a single Project Manager to represent all the Thames Valley fire services. The SPoC will cater for the small amount of local engagement from the NFCC/Programme and represent Thames Valley team across all the programme workstreams/meetings as required, and then engaging with their local Service contacts as necessary.

The current Thames Valley Project Manager will adopt this role, freeing up the 3 local Project Managers to focus on other priorities within their Services. Maintaining a SPoC within the Thames Valley will ensure that a level of contact will still be maintained with the Programme and mitigates the risk of losing staff knowledge and experience when scaling back resources.

The Thames Valley Strategic lead and SPoC will ensure relevant communications and developments in ESMCP are managed accordingly, as well as maintaining a significantly reduced level of internal governance. Regular meetings between the PMs will continue to ensure that information is shared and the SC Programme Board meetings will continue to be held in line with the dates of the Fire Customer Group meetings.

The Thames Valley Project team are currently in the process of safely storing all previous work completed on the ESMCP to ensure nothing is lost, so that when the Programme restarts, previous work can be easily accessed and understood.

Programme Restart

The NFCC has confirmed that they will provide Services with 6-12 months notice regarding the point at which resources will be required to step up again, and that this will not be until mid-2025 at the earliest.

The expectation from the Thames Valley team will be, that at the point resources are requested to reconvene, the NFCC/Programme are in a position where they have:

- An approved signed off Full Business Case
- Suppliers they are confident can deliver
- Clear and evidenced timelines with a delivery plan
- A new resource funding model that has been agreed

[End]